

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of distributing software with a computer system to a user

comprising the acts of:

recording data on a fixed medium in the computer system;

providing for transfer of the computer system to the user; and

controlling access to the data through computer executable code that requires

~~authorization~~ for continued access to the data.

2. The method of distributing software of claim 1 wherein the act of recording

~~data on the fixed medium includes recording software application program~~

instructions on the fixed medium.

3. The method of distributing software of claim 2 wherein recording software

application program instructions on the fixed ~~medium~~ includes recording software

application program instructions that enable a software application that does not

depend on continued access to a network for fully functional operation.

4. The method of distributing software of claim 1 wherein the act of recording

data on the fixed medium includes recording data on a hard disk drive.

5. The method of distributing software of claim 1 wherein the act of controlling

access to the data includes the computer system automatically executing computer

readable instructions to contact a party authorized to grant access to the data.

6. ~~The method of distributing software of claim 5 wherein executing computer~~

readable instructions includes executing instructions to activate a network link.

1 7. The method of distributing software of claim 5 wherein executing computer
2 readable instructions includes executing instructions to activate access to the Internet.

1 8. The method of distributing software of claim 1 wherein the act of controlling
2 access to the data includes determining if a user has a sufficient account credit to
3 continue access to the data.

1 9. The method of distributing software of claim 1 wherein the act of controlling
2 access to the data includes determining if a user should be billed for accessing the
3 data.

1 10. A software module used in a computer system operable to provide controlled
2 access to a software application being stored on a fixed medium in the computer
3 system and being distributed with the computer system, the software module
4 operating by:
5 detecting use of the software application on the computer system; and
6 verifying authority to access the software application.

1 11. The software module of claim 10 wherein the software application does not
2 depend on continued access to a network for fully functional operation.

1 12. The software module of claim 10 wherein the software module and the
2 software application are stored on the computer system during manufacture of the
3 computer system.

1 13. The software module of claim 10 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application verifies authority of a particular user to access the software
3 application.

1 14. The software module of claim 10 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application verifies authority of an accessing computer system to access the
3 software application.

1 15. The software module of claim 10 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application is accomplished through a network connection.

1 16. The software module of claim 10 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application is accomplished through an Internet interface.

1 17. The software module of claim 10 further comprising:
2 if authority is verified, then allowing uninterrupted access to the software application;
3 and
4 if authority is not verified, then interrupting access to the software application.

1 18. The software module of claim 17 wherein if authority to access the software
2 application is not verified, then the user is presented with an opportunity to qualify for
3 access to the software application.

1 19. The software module of claim 18 wherein the opportunity to qualify for access
2 to the software application includes generating a request to set up an account.

1 20. The software module of claim 17 wherein if authority to access the software
2 application is not verified, then the user's access to the software application is
3 terminated.

1 21. A computer system operable to provide controlled access to a software
2 application stored on a fixed medium in the computer system and distributed with the
3 computer system comprising:
4 a processor;

5 a memory coupled to the processor; and
6 a software module executable on the processor and the memory, the software module
7 being responsive to the activation of the software application to:
8 verify authority to access the software application;
9 if authority is verified, then to allow uninterrupted access to the software
10 application; and
11 if authority is not verified, then to interrupt access to the software application.

1 22. The computer system of claim 21 wherein the accessed software application
2 does not depend on continued access to a network for fully functional operation.

1 23. The computer system of claim 21 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application verifies authority of a particular user to access the software
3 application.

1 24. The computer system of claim 21 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application verifies authority of an accessing computer system to access the
3 software application.

1 25. The computer system of claim 21 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application is accomplished through a network connection.

1 26. The computer system of claim 21 wherein verifying authority to access the
2 software application is accomplished through an Internet interface.

1 27. The computer system of claim 21 wherein if authority to access the software
2 application is not verified, then the user is presented with an opportunity to qualify for
3 access to the software application.

1 28. The computer system of claim 26 wherein the opportunity to qualify for
2 access to the software application includes generating a request to set up an account.

1 29. The computer system of claim 21 wherein if authority to access the software
2 application is not verified, then the user's access to the software application is
3 terminated.

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